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ABSTRACT

This is the third issue of the magazine to focus on baseball in Panola County (Texas). The issue salutes the Carthage High School baseball program during two periods of its history. The first period was the early 1940's under Coach E. B. Morrison, whose teams were State Finalists in 1941 and 1942. The second period covered is the era of Coach Scott Lee. Under Lee, the Bulldogs were State Champions in 1990 and State Semi-Finalists in 1994. The Loblolly has been a project of students at Gary High School (Texas) since 1973 and is devoted to the collection and preservation of East Texas history and culture. (EH)

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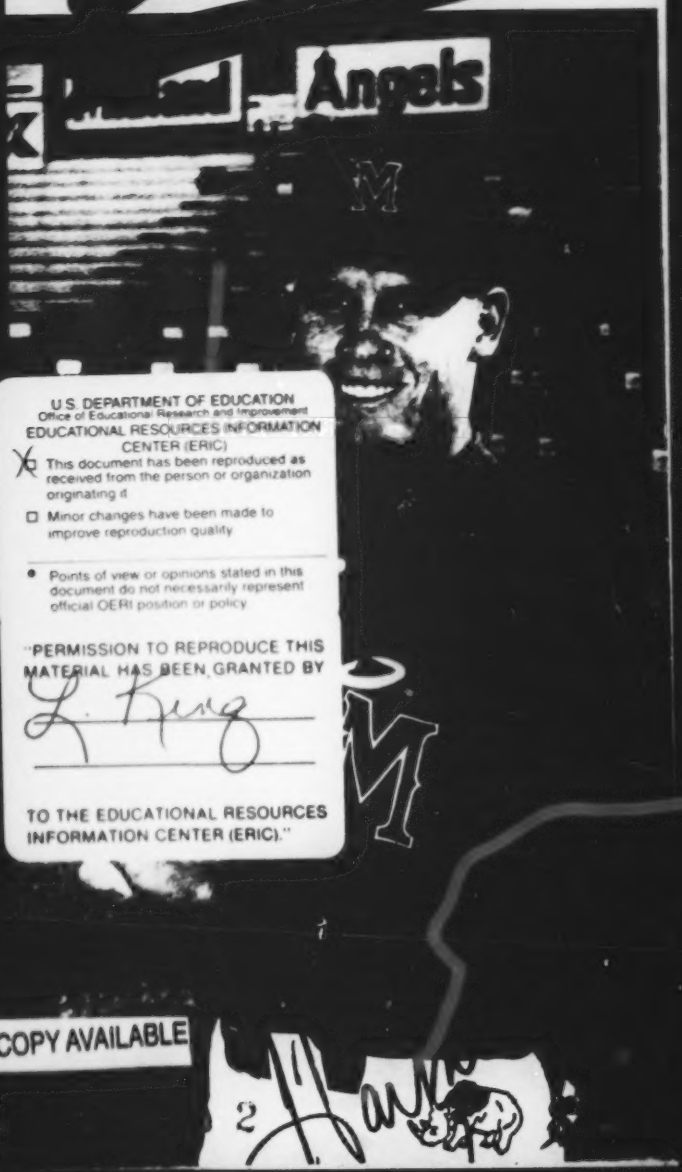
CARTHAGE HIGH SCHOOL Baseball



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Our thanks go to Mr. Melvin Lack of Victoria, Texas and to the Ex-Students Association of the University of Texas for the gift of the Macintosh computer used for the preparation of this issue and for future issues as well.

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This is the third issue on baseball in Panola County. This time we saluted the Carthage High School baseball program. We picked two periods to cover. The first was the early 1940's under Coach E.B. Morrison. His teams were State Finalists in 1941 and 1942. The second is the era of Coach Scott Lee. Under him the Bulldogs were State Champs in 1990 and State Semi-Finalists in 1994. And the excellence goes on.

We have not meant to overlook other greats in Carthage baseball, but had to face space limitations in the magazine.

Samantha Woodfin, Editor

The Loblolly Staff: Helen Marx, Beth Hazelwood, Lacie Downing, Brad Kennedy, Nicholas Downing, Mandy Morton, and editor Samantha Woodfin.

Lovell Kelley

Lovell Kelley has been a friend and supporter of the Loblolly since the beginning. As a native of Gary his memories of the community goes back to the 1920's. He helped us in the past on a story relating to his father and the store the family ran on the Gary square.

Now he has helped us again on our report on Panola County baseball. His memories of playing baseball for E. B. Morrison at Carthage High School are still vivid. And Lovell Kelley remembers seeing Vic Frasier pitch for the Gary town team during the off-season from major league pitching duties.

In 1935-36, Mr. Kelley won five separate letters in five different sports at Carthage High School. He won those letters in football, basketball, baseball, track, and tennis. He was the first to do that at Carthage. The only one to match that since then was Jacke Davis who we interviewed previously.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: Here in Gary, TX on Jan. 27, 1919. Our house is still standing here in Gary. It's the first house on the left as you go into Carthage.

Q: Tell us a little about your family and schooling here in Gary?

A: I have two sisters who graduated from Gary High School, and my father had a store here in the depression years. I went to school here.

Q: How many years did you go to Gary?

A: Through the 9th grade.

Q: Could you tell us why you went to Carthage? Was it for academics or sports?

A: No, I was rather young and immature, and the principal and I didn't get along.

Q: What sports did you play in high school?

A: I played football, and I guess the first game I ever saw, I played in. I also played basketball, ran track and played tennis and of course I played baseball. I believe I'm the first five letterman from Carthage.

Q: Could you tell us a little about high school baseball in the 1930's?

A: High School baseball was very competitive in those days. Also we had a Class C league here in East Texas. Kilgore, Marshall, Longview, and Tyler all had Class C baseball. We had several famous big league baseball players in the Class C league like Ed Lopat. He was over in Marshall. He was one I could remember. He played for the Yankees for seven years.

Q: Did you play baseball under E.B. Morrison?

but when I got to high school they started throwing those curve balls and I learned I wasn't that good of a batter. But I could field really well. They had a lot of try-outs in places like Tyler and Texarkana. We would go and try to make baseball players of ourselves.

And then he told us of his remembrance of Vic Fraiser, the Major League pitcher of the 1930's.

Q: Do you remember Vic Fraiser when you were a teenager?

A: Yes sir I sure do.

Q: Did he trade at your dad's store in Gary?

A: Yes, he traded at my dad's store whenever he came in from the end of baseball season until he went to spring training every year.

Q: Did he carry out a charge account during the winter?

A: Oh yea. He would trade there in the winter time. Then when he got back to playing baseball, he would send a check to my daddy.

Q: Good as gold every year?

A: Oh yea, he did it for several years. He was a wonderful fellow.

Q: So do you remember him when you were a boy?

A:Oh yes, I remember him, I used to go out to the ball park and watch him play ball when he would come in after the regular season was over.

Q: Did Gary have like a town team?

A: Yes sir, Gary had a team.

Q: And was he the pitcher?

A: He was the pitcher.

Q: And did someone named "Sharp" catch for him?

A: Yes Grover Sharp was the catcher.

Q: He was a Gary boy?

A: Yes sir he was a Gary boy.

Q: Do you remember who else played on the team?

A: I remember Buford Hopkins, the third base player and Elmo Heaton, a cousin of mine. He played second base. And that's about all I can recall. They were a pretty good team.

Q: So where did they play the games at?

A: On a field out from Gary towards Teneha and Carthage highway.

Q: Did you have a pretty good field?

A: Yes, it was a good field, the only thing was it didn't have any fences. Course you stood while you were watching the game. They had a net backstop to catch the balls.

Q: Who did they play against?

A: They played a lot of teams, but when Vic was pitching they had a good ball team. When Vic pitched a lot of people came to see him pitch.

Q:So, he was kind of local hero?

A: Yes, he was.

Q: Did you ever talk to him yourself?

A: No, I didn't, I was just a small kid.

Q: He pitched for the Chicago White Sox?

A:Yes for a while. I think he did.

Q: Did he prefer Texas to the North?

A: Oh, yes, he was like I am, a good old country boy. He liked East Texas. He always liked to come home to East Texas.

Q: So he had some other family that lived around Gary?

A: Oh yes, he had some relatives here.

Q: During the 1930's did a lot of towns play baseball?

A: Oh yes, a lot of time they had semi-pro teams.

Q: Was this before television?

A: Oh yes, this was the day that if it was watermelon season you ate watermelons on Sunday. If it was peanut season you picked peanuts, and if Vic came in it was baseball season.

Q: Did he make the season?

A: Yes, he made the season. Those were wonderful times, of course. Nobody had any money. We just enjoyed the sports. We didn't have to pay to get in. Dean Hopkins' father played third base, his name was Buford. They had a pretty good team. I'm not sure who else played. Oh yea, Cecil Ford played center field. Cecil was a pretty good ball player.

Doug Samford

We discovered the existence of Doug Samford from his daughter, Teresa Dennard, a former teacher at Gary High School. She arranged for him to come to school for an interview. We discovered him to be a good storyteller who shared his experiences as a star football and baseball player. He went on to play professional baseball with the Washington Senators organization. Then he came back to East Texas for a career in coaching, including a tour at Carthage. He has also helped with youth baseball as part of a busy retirement.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born on May 4, 1924 in a three room shack in the middle of a cotton field in southwest Shelby County.

Q: How was your family and school as you were growing up?

A: I was born in a family of four. Most families were rather large back in those days. I only had one sister because my father felt that he could not afford any more children. We were not very blessed with good jobs and etc.. In 1930, our gross income was only thirty dollars per year, but that's just poor people. I was born on a family that loved sports. We loved to hunt, fish, and play baseball. I always liked to go into a cow-pasture and watch men play baseball. But unfortunately, if you wanted to play baseball when you got old enough to play, World War II was going on.

Doug Samford with the North Carolina Concords 1950

Q: How did you learn about baseball?

A: I inherited the desire to play baseball. When I was thirteen years old my family moved from our farm in Shelby County to the southern part of Arkansas to a little town named Norphlet. When I was fourteen, in the summer of 1938, a gentleman in our community organized a baseball team of fourteen and fifteen year olds. Usually, on a baseball team of that nature, the slowest and the biggest boy was the catcher, or sometimes the smallest. Since I was the smallest on the team, I had to be the catcher. In those days, we had terrible facilities and equipment, so I had to wear equipment that was made for grown men.

Q: What was baseball like in high school?

A: I had my first chance to play baseball in 1940. We worked out for a couple of weeks, but because of the war they said that there would be no more baseball. So I was really disappointed that I didn't get to play high school baseball. Then in the summer of 1941 I thought I would get to play in a nearby town, Smackover, Arkansas, for the American Legion program, but it was also canceled. I grew up in years that you didn't have the chance to play baseball, so I didn't have the chance to develop my skills.

Q: What are some of the events that lead to your involvement in pro baseball?

A: When I came back from the war, I was twenty-two years old. I got to play my first baseball game on a Sunday afternoon in San Augustine, Texas. I was playing for what was then called the Center Merchants. In East Texas , as well as many places, baseball was an exciting thing, especially in the semi-pro leagues. Almost all of the communities around had baseball teams. Many people would get jobs at oil companies because they provided jobs and sponsored baseball teams. This gave them the opportunity to play baseball. Of course, baseball is a difficult game to play.

I remember in 1945 in Okinawa, that Leo Durocher, who was one of the great managers of professional baseball (he

managed for the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants), gave us a speech. He told us about what a prospect was in baseball, and that is something that young men ought to know. You have to be able to run, and run fast. You have to be able to throw, and throw hard. If you can hit, hit with power. Also, you have to take care of yourself physically, and have the right mental attitude.

I have a little story to tell about what really encouraged me to play or rather to further my schooling in athletics. On November 14, 1941, after a Homecoming ball game, which that night I had a good game, an older friend of mine came up to me and put his arm around my shoulder and said, "Hey, do you know that you have just played your last football game?" That really did concern me and I had to live with it for the next five years while I was in service overseas. So, this was a great challenge to me, and I think that every young person needs a challenge.

So, five years later I was able to touch a football in my first practice session at SFA in 1946. They gave me the ball four times and I scored four touchdowns. I believe that every young person needs someone to tell them that they love them and try to encourage them to do better in life. One of the great events in my semi-pro career was the Houston Post Tournament which invited many teams from Texas. We also played in the state tournament in Waco. In 1947, a scout from the Washington Senators came up and offered me $5,000 to sign a baseball contract, which back then was a tremendous amount of money. So I went to Chattanooga with one of their teams and then I went to Washington and practiced with them. The first thing that I would do when I walked into a baseball park was to look how far the left field fence was to see if I had a chance at hitting a home run. So I was amazed when I went to Chattanooga (Lookouts), a professional baseball team which was in the Southern Association, to see that the distance was 375 feet with a 30 foot fence. A person would have to have a pretty good blow to hit one that far. But I stayed there for three days and then went to the Washington Senators, in Washington D.C., and the distance there was even greater at 405 feet. There are not even as many parks today that are 400 feet. Of course, I wondered if I could hit the ball that far or not, but I doubted that I could ever reach that distance even though

I could hit the ball well for a man my size. But I did turn down their offer in 1947 to play professional baseball, then I went back to school and played football.

Unfortunately, in 1948 I hurt my wrist playing football, which they would not fix because they were afraid that I would miss a football game. That hurt my power as far as hitting the ball for a distance. I finally signed a baseball contract with the Washington Senators in 1950. I went to one of their Minor League teams and played in a Minor League in North Carolina a couple of years just to determine if I had a chance. Every young person has a dream and they have to decide whether they are going to follow this dream or if it is just a fantasy. But I did enjoy playing two years in North Carolina during the '50-'51 season. I was married and had started my family, and the last year it seemed like I didn't hit the ball too well. But my average was .294, which wasn't bad. The scout told me that they didn't give up on me, I just gave up on them.

Q: How was football and baseball at SFA?

A: I was able to make the Second All-Conference team as a fullback, and in baseball I had no problem making the All-Conference team of the three years that I played center field for SFA.

Brad Kennedy with Doug Sanford

SAMFORD TOPS HITTING FOR WEEK AT .500

"Seven out of eight regulars over .300 mark for week's work"

By: Earl Kelly

(Concord, North Carolina paper,1950:)

Even Hollywood's movie magnates would hardly believe how the Concord National's finished out last week's six-game slate with a thrilling 10th-inning home run climax. They would also have to search a pretty good while to find a club which had seven of eight regulars hitting over the .300 mark for a commendable week's work. That's the story-book side of last week's "red-hot" Nats, who have worked themselves within sight of the first division in their first full week under Manager Ginger Watts. They are now five and a half games away from the upper bracket, and still have Statesville, four games away, to hurdle before any first-division meals can be ordered.

The Nats finished one of the winningest weeks with five favorable decisions in six tries, and might have done better but for three games washed out. It was their second best week. They won six of seven May 22-27. Their latest was Saturday night's glorified double-header over Statesville, 8-4 in the first game and 7-6 in the second, courtesy of Len Cross' mighty two-run homer in the 10th with one out.

Tex Samford, then snapped a slumping average into one of note by batting the rawhide at a .500 clip.

Q: What has your involvement been in baseball since you quit playing?

A: When I started coaching in 1951, in Timpson, my salary that year was only $2,800 so I found out that coaching doesn't pay very much. But, I've had an enjoyable time in coaching. However, after I started coaching I discovered that I had inherited heart disease and coaching is a bad profession to be in when you have something like that. Like I said, I enjoyed coaching and I always enjoyed the young men that I coached. I had some excellent ball players. Probably one of the best places that I coached in East Texas was White Oak because of the funding and the great athletes. I probably had one of the best teams at White Oak that Class A has ever had. In the Regional Finals, we played against Whitehouse and we won thirty-three to three. I have also continued in baseball by helping my grandchildren and other children of the community in Little League. Baseball has just always been a part of my life.

Q: How do you think baseball is different than it was when you played?

A: Well, now there is more emphasis on speed and home run hitting distance, and of course the facilities and the equipment are better. Everything has naturally progressed just like everything else. The only drawback that I see is that they have youngsters playing too many games in Little League. By the time you turn 16 you have already played 11 or 12 years and by that time your family is already disgusted with it and you are tired of playing it. I believe that Little League ruins more baseball players than they develop.

E.B. Morrison

E.B. Morrison was a long time figure in the history of the Carthage Schools. His duties ranged from teacher to principal to assistant superintendent. He coached football as his initial assignment. But his greatest fame came as the coach of the baseball team at Carthage in the 1930's and early 1940's. His teams were runners-up in the State Championships of 1941 and 1942. That was when all high schools, regardless of size, competed in one tournament. Also in 1942, Carthage High School defeated the University of Texas freshman team. That is a game still to be remembered.

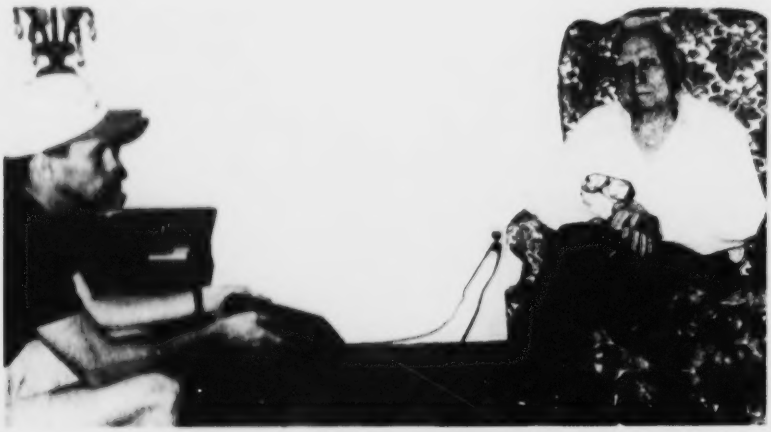
Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born on June 26,1907, in Jefferson, Texas. This coming June I'll be 86 years old.

Q: Has your family always lived in this area?

A: I came to Carthage in 1931, fall of 1931 to be the football coach. When the spring came around I was handed the baseball team. We played out there on the hospital yard. We had a home-made backup. We'd get out there playing ball and if you've ever played baseball you know you'll foul one or two off. They would land in a pine thicket. My house wasn't there at the time. So we'd shut down and all of us would come across the road. And then we'd look for the baseballs among the pines. When we had gathered them all up we'd go back and hit some more. They'd foul some more and we'd go find them again. We dressed, for what dressing was done, to change into uniforms in the basement of an old building.

Are you familiar with the Carthage Schools, like Baker School? There was a three story building located there in 1935 or 1936. In the basement was a hot water heater, and our boys changed clothes there. So I used as a gimmick for the boys who hustled the hardest got to leave practice first and get the hot bath.



E.B. Morrison with staff member Cody Pierce

Transportation of the ball club was a problem. This might be of interest to you because I know you boys don't go through it. They take better care of you. I was handicapped and couldn't have done any better. We had a ball game, I forgot which year, in Pineland, down below Center. Well, came time to go to the game we couldn't get a ride. There was no transportation, and I was about ready to go to the telephone and cancel the game. One of the boys said, "Well, I can get my daddy's pick-up truck." So I said , "Bring it around." So the driver and I got in the front seat and the rest of the boys just piled in the back the best way they could. It was kind of crowded. We were toodling down the road, the other side of Center, and a highway cop stopped us.

I wondered what was going to happen here. I said, "Officer, what have we done? We weren't breaking the speed limit." He said, "Well, I'll tell you. You're driving a vehicle here which has a farm license on it. And number two is you're not supposed to haul anything except farm products and those boys sure aren't that." So he lets us go on. He wrote out a ticket then tore it up. I promised him that if he'd let me get those boys down to that ball game and play it, we'll get back home and not do that again. I said, "We'll cancel a game before we go." He let us go and we played the game, and I think we won it, if I remember.

Another interesting incident was in relation to the places where we played. We played on just any sort of diamond. There was a cow pasture out here by the hospital here. The most interesting field we played on was when we played Byrd High School in Shreveport out at a community park. And we got out there and got lined up and had our batting practice. We got the game under way and all of the sudden I looked out in the outfield and saw several women and a whole pile of little kids with Easter Baskets. They'd come out looking for Easter eggs where the guys were playing. I was thinking one of those boys would run over a little kid. I asked the Byrd High School coach if he wanted to call the game. He said, "No, we'll just be careful and not hurt any of them." So we had a ball game on one end of the diamond and an Easter egg hunt on the other end of the diamond. That was a rather special experience.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: I went to the University of Texas. I had a master's degree in education administration.

Q: What kind of duties did you have as coach administrator?

A: Well I was a classroom teacher. I taught American and Medieval, and Modern History, and a course in Texas History. This wasn't all at the same time. I also taught a course one time in first year algebra. My main teaching assignment was Spanish. I taught about two classes of first year Spanish and one of second year Spanish. Of course that was three classes and wasn't considered a full load. I had five courses all together with other classes I taught.

In 1942 after I'd been here ten years I was made principal of the high school. Some of the men had to go to the war. I went to the Army myself in June of 1942.

Q: As far as coaching baseball when did you go to the state playoffs?

A: Yes, in 1940, San Augustine won our school league. They beat us for the championship. So I kept our boys together and got them to Austin to playing the State Championship. That was in 1940. That was in the playoffs for the American League Team. We came in second. I wanted them to have that practice. It was the same group of boys in almost the same identical positions that were back in 1941. We beat San Augustine in 1941 and we went to Dallas to represent East Texas.

If you were a high school and wanted a team, you got one together. Then you did the best you could in arranging games in getting to games and not riding farm trucks.

Now in 1941, we went to Dallas to play in the State Championship. And we played in the Texas League ball park as part of a Twilight doubleheader against a Dallas league team. And we were up there from Monday until Saturday night. We got beat by the Dallas high school team. Well, I went home with that team and they graduated.

Then in the spring of 1942, the most exciting part of my coaching career was when the University of Texas sent me expense money and invited us to come and play their freshman team. That was in the spring of 1942. We went to Austin. And I have a box score write up of the game. We beat the University of Texas, freshman. Of course that was a thrill of a lifetime for me as a baseball coach.

Then in 1942, I had this veteran team that had been together for the American Legion play-off, and the 1941 high school playoffs. They came back again for the 1942 high school State Championship. We were in Dallas again playing against a team from there. We played them on a Saturday night after being there all week. The boys were beaten again, so we were runners-up for the third time in a state tournament. This was with practicing the same boys.

Q: Jim Reeves was one of your players?

A: Jim Reeves was one of my players. He was an all state-pitcher. He pitched on the American Legion Team and then two years on the high school team. He was the winning pitcher against the University of Texas. Then we were in Dallas in 1942, playing for the state championship. I enlisted in the Army. They gave me five days to get the games over with and get the boys back home. I told somebody one time how I left a boy, a ball player, and when I came back home, he was a singer. I didn't know Jim Reeves could sing a lick, but he made his name.

He had gotten hurt some way playing semi-pro ball. He played with some Louisiana big leaguers, but that was after I left. And he got hurt and was unable to be drafted into the service. It didn't make sense that an all-state ball player couldn't go into the Army, but he had crippled his knee. And he also had a blood pressure problem and the Army wouldn't take him. So he became a disc jockey at the Henderson radio station. And before you knew it, he was taking those songs and singing them himself. That started his world wide reputation as a singer.

Later, when Mrs. Morrison and I were traveling in England in a bus, the English bus driver was playing one of Jim Reeves' first records that he ever made. I told him, "Well,

you're hauling his home-town people on this bus." I said, "Just go ahead and play him." I got a kick in listening to Jim Reeves over in London.

Q: Jim Reeves was a pitcher?

A: Yes, and when he wasn't pitching , he was too good a ball player and batter to be on the bench. One season he alternated in right field with another all-state right handed pitcher named June Groves. The two of them were both fine pitchers. In 1941 they alternated in right field. When one was pitching the other was playing right field. Then the next year I lost my regular first baseman for the 1942 season. So I brought them in to alternate between first base and pitching. I needed their maturity and leadership up on the infield. And they were too good batters to stay on he bench. They got to play every game.

I had a boy one time, one of my boys I was coaching, was a good pitcher. But he resented it and didn't want to miss a game. He wanted to play in every game. I had a little problem in having him pitch in his turn and sitting out in between. Finally in his senior year he played first base for me and made a good ball player. I finally settled him on the first base where he could play every game. I just didn't need him as a pitcher. And we got through the season really well. He went on to the University of Texas and played on their team for a year or two. His name was Ralph Alien, Jr.. He's written up in the newspapers stories.

Q: What did you teach back then as to using different pitches like the curve and the change up?

A: Well, I don't recall the exact details of it all. I looked for a good strong throwing arm and who knew the game. One of the things that's different from now is, and you boys might have gone through that, is you have to play Little League ball. We didn't have Little League when I was coaching. And the boys who were not old enough and not far enough advanced in school
to come out for the high school baseball team played softball. They had a big old fourteen inch ball they played with. And my

ball players were brought up to learn base running and timing, batting and throwing, to the correct base. You know that's the important thing. In coaching baseball you like to get boys who can throw to the correct base at the right time. They learned that in softball. Today you learn it in Little League.

I remember one time we played in the county championship for softball as part of what they called the "County Meet" in those days. My team won the county championship. The next day I had a game in Hallsville with the high school baseball team. It was the first game of the season. I've forgotten what year it was. Well we went to Hallsville, and the only change in the play-ground ball team and the team I put up against Hallsville was the pitcher. And I took out the shortstop who plays between first and second. Everybody had their own position.

Today I think the Little League is a fine thing. Players really get developed. I'm sorry I missed it. It all happened after I got out of baseball. The boys learn a lot from when they're beginners. When you see an all star team perform, you see how they've developed. If you boys went through that you know what I'm talking about.

Q: You said you enlisted in World War II in 1942?

A: It was in 1942. I enlisted in the Army as a Physical Education Instructor. But when I got to training camp I qualified for Officer Candidate School. So I went to Miami Beach and graduated as a Second Lieutenant. I shipped out overseas with the 15th Air Force to Italy. I was a squadron intelligence officer. Actually what an intelligence officer does is to give like a scouting report. That was the strength and weakness of those we were up against. That's what I did in the Army. Here it wasn't a game, but was a life and death situation.

Q: After the war did you continue coaching baseball?

A: After the war I came home and became the superintendent of schools in Granger, Texas. Then I went from Granger to Cuero, Texas as superintendent. I didn't coach baseball except the first year I was in Cuero.

There wasn't a baseball coach and the boys wanted to play ball, so I went with them. When the high school season was over we kept them going as an American Legion Team. We qualified for the district playoff and went to Laredo, Texas to play against teams from the Valley area. The boys lost as they weren't experienced enough. But we had a lot of fun out of it and I enjoyed working with the boys. But coaching a baseball team is no place for a superintendent. I had enough to do with that job so I had to let the coaching go.

Q: After you stopped coaching what did you do?

A: I did the routine duties of the superintendent. I came back to Carthage as Assistant Superintendent, in 1959 or 1960. So actually I've been in Carthage two different times.

Q: What have you done since your retirement?

A: I work to keep up with the yard work. I try to go to church and Sunday school every Sunday. That's about the limit of my taking part in things. I go to the Methodist Church.

Q: How is baseball different now from when you were coaching?

A: Transportation is different now. Teams don't ride in farm pick-up trucks any more. The diamonds are prepared better now. When my boys got back from out of town ball games it was usually after dark. Most of them had to hitch-hike to a variety of places in the county to get home. They had to get home the best they could. They were never fed. The school never bought their supper. The boys didn't want to stop and eat. They wanted to get home. I always worried about that. Once or twice I heard Jim Reeves say he got stranded in town after a ball game. He slept in the basement of the old court house. The night watchman let him in and showed him where he could stretch out and take a nap, sleep the night out. The next mourning he went home. But we had it pretty rough. Our equipment wasn't up to standard of what it is now. Boys now have a lot less to worry about. Three strikes is still out though. The spirit of the boys to play has stayed strong. Today that's

helped by the Little League. If they come into high school and have had some successful Little League they carry the attitude with them.

The boys didn't get letters for playing baseball. I did have three boys who won all state honor for baseball and did receive awards. They got little gold baseballs. They were June Graves and Jim Reeves who were both pitchers, and my shortstop for three years in American Legion and in the high school. His name was Chester Studdard. He was a fine shortstop. Both Graves and Reeves were strong pitchers, had grown up on the farm. All were used to hard work.

1940 CHS Baseball Team

First Row- Glynon Williamson, Chester Studdard, June Graves, Vernon Rowden, Dee Lawless, Leroy Edge, Travis (Jim) Reeves. Second Row- Coach Morrison, Ralph Allen, George Y. Bounds, Buddy Bounds, Alton Cromwell, Linzo Beloney, Floyd Barton. Third Row- Paul Griffith, Emory Hancock, James Edge, Red Barnett, Henry Bounds, Carl Miller, Charlie Hodges. Second string not in uniform.

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The Big Game

According to E.B. Morrison, the high point of his coaching career at Carthage High School came in 1942. As a way to prepare for the State High School Championship, he scheduled a game with the University of Texas Freshmen Team. Playing a college team would be good competition and preparation for facing the best of high school teams later. Playing first base for Texas was Ralph Allen, who had graduated from Carthage in 1941. And to the surprise of the University of Texas, Carthage won 3-1 behind the fine pitching of Jim Reeves.

The following report on the game, from the Panola Watchman, is as follows:

Behind the brilliant pitching of Travis Reeves, Carthage defeated the University of Texas Frosh here, Friday afternoon on the Clark field diamond, 3-1.

Using a curve ball, that cracked like a whip, Reeves struck out nine yearlings.

Almost as effective as Reeves was Ellis Wheless, who gave up the same number of hits, four, and who struck out eight men.

Carthage scored all of its runs in a big fourth inning. Barnette opened with a single, Graves lined out, Studdard singled Barnett home. Reeves then came through with a triple that scored Studdard. Chink Taylor ran into Wheless on a ball hit just in front of the base and Reeves came home. When Wheless tried to catch Langford at first.

The Yearlings scored their lone tally in the eighth when Ruben Ortega, who got three of the four hits the Frosh made, came through with a triple, and scored a minute later on Charlie Munson's sacrifice fly to right.

Carthage		A	B	H	O	A
Lawless	C	3	0	8	2	
Barntt	3b	4	1	2	2	
Graves	1b	4	0	6	0	
Studard	ss	4	1	2	0	
Reeves	p	4	1	0	1	
Langford	cf	4	0	1	1	
Bounds	rf	4	0	3	0	
Baker	2b	2	0	1	1	
VanSandt		3	1	4	0	
Totals		*32*	*4*	*27*	*7*	

Frosh		A	B	H	O	A
Andrew	rf	2	0	3	0	
Ortega	ss	4	3	0	2	
Munser	cf	4	0	4	0	
Schwbel	2b	2	0	0	1	
Whams	3b	4	0	1	1	
Allen	1b	4	11	1	0	
Schrder	lf	1	0	0	0	
Runge	lf	1	0	0	0	
Taylor	c	1	0	4	0	
Holton	c	3	0	4	0	
Whelles	p	3	0	0	6	
Fortune	ph	1	0	0	0	
Totals		*30*	*4*	*27*	*10*	

Runs, Barnett, Studdard, Reeves, Ortega: three base hits, Reeves, Ortega: two base hit, Van Zandt: runs batted in , Reeves, Langford, Munson, Allen, stolen bases Munson, Allen; errors, Barnett, Williams, Taylor, Whelles; struck out by Reeves 9, by Whelles 8; bases on balls: bases on balls, off Reeves 4, off Whelles 2-- Austin American.

Ralph Allen Jr. former member of the Carthage Bulldogs, participated in the game Saturday with the University Freshmen team. He is leading hitter and regular first baseman for that nine.

1942-University of Texas Freshman Team, Ralph Allen (CHS grad 1941) rear row far right.

Jim Reeves

Jim Reeves is best known as "Gentleman Jim Reeves," the legend of country and western music. He was a native of Panola County who first gained fame as a member of Coach E.B. Morrison's high caliber teams of 1940-1942. He was a fine curve ball pitcher who helped the team reach the state finals two years in a row. Later he pitched for the St. Louis Cardinals in their Minor League system until an injury ended his baseball career. Then he turned to music and the rest is history.

The following article first appeared in the Fall 1974 issue of Loblolly.

"Gentleman Jim " Reeves is still a giant in the world of country and western music. Even ten years after his death, his tapes and albums are best sellers. He has achieved an international reputation as a great singer and entertainer. All this and more is widely known by his friends and admirers. So we talked to some of his friends and relatives in Panola County to find out more about Jim Reeves before he set out to conquer the world of music. We wanted to discover more of what this man was like before millions had come to know him. The figure that developed for us too, was that of one who seemed destined to greatness at whatever he tried, but while doing so remaining a considerate friend to all those around him.

Jim Reeves has been called the Abraham Lincoln of country music, but to most he was "just plain Jim."

Like most successful people, Reeves started from scratch. He was born and reared in Panola County and attended schools in DeBerry and Carthage.

At Carthage High School, Reeves was a celebrity. As a pitcher on the school's baseball team, Reeves led the team to state honors and received a baseball scholarship from the University of Texas.

Mr. E.B. Morrison, principal of the Koonce Middle School, was Jim's baseball coach at Carthage High School. Mr. Morrison remembers with admiration Jim's stick-ability in whatever he wanted to do. "When we would practice ball until after dark he would hitchhike home because he lived fifteen or twenty miles across the river and would miss the bus. Jim wanted to be a ball player, he paid the price and practiced. Some of his teammates are well known here in Panola County. Let me name a few of them: Mr. D. Lawless was his catcher, Mr. Willard Barnett played third base, June Graves was first baseman and co-pitcher. When Jim wasn't pitching June was. Chester Studdard, who is now in veterinary medicine and living in Gilmer, was short-stop. A Langford boy from DeBerry played infield, a Bounds boy from Deadwood, Mr. K. Baker, a lawyer here in Carthage, was second baseman and Mr. Vincent was the left fielder.

We took part in the state playoffs two years in a row. While Jim was on the team and pitching we won second in state. The summer of 1940 we won the American Legion playoffs. I did not know Jim could sing a note. His singing career is something I know nothing about although I'm mighty proud of it. Every time I heard one of his records I remembered him as a high school baseball player of course. Like any teacher of boys and girls going through school you are always interested in their careers and following them and are proud when they succeed. That's the way I always felt about Jim Reeves and regretted very much his untimely death because I think he was taken from us right at the height of his career. There's no way of knowing what heights he could have risen to had he lived."

While interviewing different people in Panola County on their professional associations with Jim Reeves we talked to K. Baker, a former district attorney of the Panola-Shelby County area for twelve years. Mr. Baker told us of his high school years as a close friend and teammate to Jim Reeves. "When I first met Jim Reeves we had been informed that he was a very good pitcher. We had baseball players like Travis Reeves, Chester Studdard, Willard Barnett and D. Lawless. Jim Reeves was one of the friendliest boys to just have met him that I've ever had a friendship with. After we started playing baseball in the spring of 1941, we became very close friends. With him living in DeBerry, he'd miss the bus because of practice and so he would spend many nights at my house here in Carthage. We became close boyhood friends. Jim had an outstanding personality. At that particular time, we had no idea that he had any musical talents. That year Jim won all state pitcher and our team went to the state finals. We played three schools that had more students in the school then we had in the whole city of Carthage. We played Adamson and Sunset High School from Dallas that had over 2,000 students in their high school alone. Jim made all state in 1941. The next year our team went to the state finals. I played second base, Jim pitched and played first base when he was not pitching. He was also a good hitter. In 1942 we scheduled a practice game with the University Of Texas, because we had gone to Austin for the state finals the year before with Jim pitching. We beat the University of Texas' freshman team. I remember that they

got three runs off his pitching and then he hit a home run that won the game. He was one of the best prospects, I think, for playing in the major leagues. He and June Graves, also a pitcher, were both good prospects. They both pitched no hit ball games in the state meet. We lost the state finals that year to Adamson High School of Dallas. They both made all state that year. After that Jim graduated and signed a professional contract to play professional baseball with the St. Louis Cardinals and did play, as I understand it, two years in the Minor Leagues with the St. Louis Cardinals. It was during that time Jim hurt his leg and was not able to continue his career in baseball. He then began to announce on the radio over in Henderson. I went into the service for several years and when I came out, at that particular time, Jim was just beginning his rise in the music world. He had obtained a spot on the Louisiana Hayride. From then he had three big hits "Mexican Joe," "Four Walls" and "Limbo Vimbo." Through the years Jim and I continued to be friends. When he came to Carthage he would come by for a visit. He was recognized by his friends as "Gentleman Jim." He was a gentleman and he always so conducted himself even as a young man.

It has been said that next to baseball, music was Reeves second love. One story to "Loblolly" was by Mrs. Sybil Whiddon, a cousin living in Gary. "Jim Reeves wanted to learn to play the guitar, but didn't own one. So after a little bargaining he managed to trade a bushel of pears for an old used guitar. "Jim loved to sing," she said. "He was out in the cotton patch and an old helper that picked their cotton described him as an angel if there ever was one. He believed Jim sang like an angel."

June Graves

June Graves was one of the heroes of Coach E.B. Morrison's Carthage High School Teams of 1941 and 1942. He was the hard throwing pitcher who teamed with the curve ball pitcher, Jim Reeves to make their team a force to be reckoned with at that time. Following high school, June Graves signed to play professional ball with the St. Louis Cardinals. After military service and further play in the East Texas League, June Graves retired from baseball. Career and family have kept him busy since then.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born in Old Center Community in Panola County on July 9, 1923.

Q: How was your family and early school years?

A: Well, we lived quite rural, which is just a community and not a town. I went through seven grades there and then I went to Carthage.

Q: How did you learn to play baseball?

A: One day, I just picked up a baseball and started playing with the older men.

June Graves with staff member Cody Pierce

Q: How was baseball at Carthage High School?

A: We had a good team that was supplied by the whole county. They ran buses all over the county. We were state finalists two years. I believe that was in 1941 and 1942.

Q: Was E.B. Morrison your coach when you were playing for Carthage High School?

A: Yes, Coach Morrison was the coach at the time that I played for Carthage. He is a fine, fine person, and so is his wife. They are both friends of mine.

Q: How many seasons did you play baseball?

A: I played for three or four seasons.

Q: Were you considered the fast ball pitcher?

A: Yes, I guess I was considered the fast ball pitcher and Jim Reeves was the curve ball pitcher. Ralph Allen pitched some too.

Q: Did you throw a no hitter in the state tournament?

A: Yes, I threw a no hitter in 1942.

Q: What team did you pitch your no hitter against?

A: I think it was Mesquite and I think I pitched a one hitter in 1942. But I don't remember who it was against.

Q: So what happened in the two championship games that Carthage played in?

A: They just out manned us. They had people going into the upper minors and major leagues right out of High School. I believe the two schools we lost to was Sunset in 1941, and Adamson in 1942.

Q: Did you pitch in both championship games?

A: I relieved in both of the games. Jim Reeves started both of those games.

Q: Do you remember the game Carthage played against the University of Texas freshmen in 1942?

A: We got ready for the State Tournament in 1942. E.B. had attended Texas. We were trying to get some good stiff competition before the tournament.

So he booked games with the Texas freshmen, and Baylor freshmen, and the A&M freshmen. That was to be between the season and the tournament. We went down there, I believe, in four or five cars. And we beat the University of Texas freshmen, 3-1. Then Baylor and A&M canceled. They didn't want to lose to a high school team.

Our first game in 1941, I think, was against Hondo, Texas. Clint Hartung was the big pitcher for them. We jumped all over him and beat him and the Hondo team. He later went straight to the Major Leagues out of high school. I believe it was the New York Giants. They gave him the biggest signing bonus ever up to that time. He was called the "Hondo Hurricane."

Q: When and who did you sign with for pro baseball?

A: I signed in 1942 after high school with the St. Louis Cardinals. Then I went into the service because of World War II. I played some baseball in the service with some Major Leagues . Then I signed again, after I got out of the service, with the Cardinals in 1946.

Q: Where did you play in pro baseball?

A: When I got out of the service I went to spring training in Lynchburg, Virginia. We were right up on top of a mountain. You would run up there and get hot. And that cold air would just chill you to the bone. I got shin splints. So when I'd start to get up on a curb, I'd have to turn around sideways. My legs were in bad shape. When we busted camp there they sent me to Hamilton, Ontario. It was some cold up there. The first game I pitched up there was 33 degrees. That was part of the Cardinal system. I had problems up there and decided to come home. I then played the balance of three seasons in the East Texas League. I played for Texarkana, Longview, and Lufkin. Most of the teams were independently owned, and not owned by Major League teams. The pay there and for the Cardinals too was about $350 a month. But that was a good experience.

Q: Do you remember your best season?

A: I think I won 10 games and lost 8.

Q: Do you remember any of your teammates of any of your opponents that made it into the big leagues?

June Graves

A: Yes I do. I remember a Jinx Poindexter, Valley Eaves, and a George Washington. A man by the name of Merv Conner was an old major leaguer. Right off the top of my head I can't remember anyone else.

Q: When and why did you retire from pro baseball?

A: Well, my wife and kid played a big role in the reason that I retired. I decided that it was time to quit playing around and go to work. I went to work at Shell Oil Company.

Q: How has your career and family been since baseball?

A: I got a job at Shell Oil Company and my wife went along with it just fine.

Ralph Allen

Ralph Allen is a native of DeBerry, Texas, and grew up while graduating from Carthage High School. He had a unique perspective as to baseball by playing for and against Carthage in the years 1941 and 1942. For in 1942 he started for the University of Texas freshman team which lost a game to Carthage High. That was the high point of Coach E.B. Morrison's coaching career. After serving in World War II Ralph Allen went on to play professional baseball briefly, and semi-pro ball extensively, while living and working in the Houston area. Then in 1985, he and his wife retired and came back to DeBerry.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: It was October 9, 1923, about half way between here and Elysian Fields. Do you know where that is? It was on Tiller Road which goes west. I was born in a house, not a hospital. We lived there for a year. Then when I was one year old we moved into the house across the road from here, the white house over there. It's been built on to since those days, but it's the same place anyway. I lived in that house from age one until I went into the service.

Q: Could you tell us something of your family when you were young, and of your early schooling?

A: Well, there were three of us in the family. I had two sisters, one nine years older and the other six years older than me. I went from first grade to the seventh grade here in DeBerry. They had a wooden building here, and all grades were taught in that one building. Of course there were several rooms for the classes. They only had eleven grades then to get through high school. So for grades eight, nine, ten, eleven, I caught the bus right out here to go to Carthage. Some of the people here went to Elysian Fields school. I don't know how that worked. Some of them did, but I went to Carthage. Carthage was a much better school. I think Elysian Fields was easier. I think that's why a lot of them decided to go up there.

Ralph Allen with Loblolly's editor Samantha Woodfin

Q: How did you learn to play baseball?

A: I don't know. I guess you're born with something like that. We used to play around here. All the kids would get together. We'd just make up teams and play. If we didn't have a ball, we'd make one. We'd get twine and just wrap it around, or use cloth and make up a ball. Baseball, real ones, were hard to come by. Everyone around here played baseball. I never saw a football. There was a football on the grounds when I went to school up here. We'd get a stick for a bat. We might use cow piles for bases and get to playing.

Q: Did you play baseball in high school?

A: I sure did. I even played before that. I played first in eighth grade. Then in grades nine, ten, and eleven, I played at Carthage High School. I played first base and I pitched. I pitched even before I went to high school. The Shreveport Sports of the Texas League, as they were called then sponsored what they called a Knot Hole Gang Leagues. And they sponsored teams all over Louisiana. We over here in Texas weren't supposed to be part of that, but we called ourselves Bethany, Louisiana, which is on the state line. And we entered that and we won the whole thing. I pitched then. We were 14-15 years of age that year. We only played that one year. It's kind of like the Dixie League now. I remember we won everything there was to win. Bonneaw Peters owned the Shreveport Sports and sponsored all this. He was there for many years. He's dead now, for if he were still alive he'd be at least 100 years old. He was old even then.

Now at Carthage, on the team were four or five kids from DeBerry. It turned out to be a good team. Coach Morrison was our coach. We had some people who had played a lot of ball before they got to be seniors. We were a Double A school then. Then they didn't divide baseball up for play according to school size. We all just played each other. All of us went to Dallas to the state tournament. In 1941 we came in second, losing in the tournament final to Sunset, a bigger Dallas school. That's the year I graduated.

I graduated. Then the next year, 1942, they had just as good a team. I was a freshman at the University of Texas. Carthage High School came down to Austin and beat the

freshman team I was on 3-1. Jim Reeves was the winning pitcher.

Q: What kind of coach was Mr. Morrison?

A: He was a good coach. He was dedicated. I remember one time just like it was yesterday. We were having some kind of problem, maybe we had just lost a game. We were all sitting on some bleachers and he was just talking to us. He hung his head and said, "Maybe I should just quit." And I spoke up and said, "Maybe that would be a good idea." And he started crying. And I was just joking. He made an absurd statement and I just agreed with him. That's what it was. He may not remember that but I do. I didn't mean anything when he said maybe it would be better to get a new coach. I don't think we lost more than two games when he coached. So I went down and put my arm around him, so he'd know how I really felt.

Q: What kind of pitcher was Jim Reeves?

A: Jim Reeves was a good curve ball pitcher. He didn't throw hard, but he could place that ball. He had a wicked curve ball. He was a really good pitcher, even though he was a better musician. He later turned pro and played in the Evangeline League, but I'm getting ahead of myself. He didn't go to the Service. I was gone three years.

We had a team here in DeBerry. We went up here and had the county commissioner, which was my daddy, go with a road grader up here next to Highway 79 as you get to DeBerry. We built a pitcher's mound, and put in some bleachers. We called that semi-pro ball. Leon Davis, that's Jacke's daddy, pitched as a left-hander on that team. We played Barksdale Air Force Base who was tough. I remembered playing center field. Anyway, we played several games there.

Meanwhile, Jim Reeves was playing as a pro in The Evangeline League. That was in Louisiana. He was with the Alexandria Aces. His brother saw me in Carthage one day and said, "Jim wants you to go down there and try out for that team." About then we were just about to quit playing here. So I went down to Alexandria and finished out the season. I joined Jim Reeves on the pitching staff for Alexandria. We were also roommates at a local boarding house. I don't even know what

my record was. I remember being wild. I do remember throwing once and hitting the back stop. The catcher ran back to get it and I ran to cover home plate. I put my knee on the plate and the runner put a deep cut into it when he slid home. My knee got infected and that wound me up in the Evangeline League. Then I came back, got married, and went to Houston in 1947.

Q: So, going back earlier, how long did you play for the University of Texas after you graduated from Carthage in 1941?

A: I just played there my freshman year. That was the year when we got in the war after December 7, 1941. I finished out the year. By the way, I was a "walk-on" at the University of Texas. That is, I was there on my own, without a baseball scholarship. But I made the team. Billy Disch, the varsity coach, wrote me a letter and gave me a scholarship then for the next year. But by then I was in the service. That season, 1942, was Coach Disch's last one. He sent me the letter after I had been the second leading hitter on the freshman team, and had played first base. So I didn't go back. Billy Disch retired as he was really old, and Bib Faulk came in the next year. But I never got to play for him. My freshman coach, Ed Price, coached the varsity football team at Texas after that.

Q: Can you tell us about the game when you were at the University of Texas, and you played against the Carthage High team?

A: That was unusual. It's unheard of for a college freshman team to play a high school team. But maybe it's because Carthage finished second the year before, in 1941. And maybe it's because I had gone from playing for Carthage to playing for the Texas freshman. The game was scheduled and played, and they beat us 3-1. Jim Reeves did the pitching for Carthage, and I got two of the four hits we got off him. They weren't very strong hits, of the infield variety maybe. It was embarrassing for us to lose to a high school team. That's because Texas always recruits pretty good baseball players. They still do. And to have a high school team beat you is unusual. Jim Reeves had a really good curve ball, and it's

hard to hit a curve ball if it's placed right, or put in the right spots.

Ralph Allen

Q: Who, with , and when did you sign to play pro baseball?

A: The only pro baseball I played was what I told you before as to playing at Alexandria in the Evangeline League in 1946. I signed to played with the Galveston White Caps of the Gulf Coast League. That was in 1950. I was working full time as an electrician at the Champion Paper Mill. It was only about 45 miles from Houston to Galveston. I pitched only home games and weekend away games. We played at places like Port Arthur, Leesville, Lake Charles, Jacksonville, and Lufkin.

In 1946 I came back after playing the Evangeline League. I got married in November, 1946 and we were living in the house across the road. Anyway my daddy suggested it was time for me to go to work. So in January,1947 we moved to Houston and I got a job there. I went to work for the Champion Paper Mill in Pasadena, right on the shop channel there. I worked in the same place for 36 years, and I played many baseball games while I worked.

Q: So how did you do playing for Galveston in 1950?

A: Well, it says here in the newspaper article as follows:

Ralph Allen

Allen Signs to Hurl For Galveston Nine

Ralph Allen, Houston's top amateur hurler the past two seasons, is a pro now.

Allen, 26 year-old lanky right-hander who twirled the Heights Bulldogs to the city sandlot crown last year and who chalked up a record of 18 victories against a single defeat (that to Denver Harbor 5 to 4, two weeks ago) in two years, signed with the Galveston White Caps of the Gulf Coast League.

He hurled his first game for the Isle nine Friday night, winning 4 to 1, as he fanned 14.

Allen plans to continue working with the Champion Paper and the Fibre Company, hurling for the White Caps only when they are at home.

It took a lot of effort to work all day long, get off at 4 p.m. and drive to Galveston, put your uniform on, and then go out and pitch. You had to be in pretty good shape which I was. I did that in 1950, and in 1951 I attempted to do the same thing. But Harry Gumlfert was the new manager. He'd play in the Majors. He said, "No we don't do that. You either quit your job or you can't play with us." He'd played with the New York Giants, do I remember, when I was a kid.

So I went back to what I call sand-lot type ball, amateur, or semi-pro (whatever you want to call it). Houston had about four leagues. Each one of the teams had company sponsors. Back in those days a company could take the expenses off their income tax. They spent a lot of dollars on this. You don't see that any more. I played baseball that way until 1962.

We went into real semi-pro ball about 1959. In 1959 we were sponsored by Fed-Mart which was like today's Sams stores. They sponsored us and we went to Wichita, Kansas for the national semi-pro tournament. They still have that. Our team won $10,000 for winning there. The sponsor thought he was going to get the money, but it was divided among the players. We were the national champions. The next year Fed-Mart didn't sponsor us, but we got together and called ourselves, "the Old Pros." Eddie Noblauch, was one, who had played in he Texas League. His nephew is now playing second base for the Minnesota Twins. We had a bunch of old pros and put a team together. I finished my career with that bunch in 1962. That last year we went out to Lubbock for a tournament and stayed two weeks. We had another sponsor who didn't mind spending money. He flew some of us out there, and took some out by bus. He put us up in a hotel for two weeks. We were playing to try to go back to Wichita, but we got beat in the final game. That was the last ball I pitched.

But playing amateur baseball earlier we did win two national titles in a row. Amateur baseball was that promoted by he National Baseball Congress. We won that in 1954 and in 1955. In 1959 I had gone on to another type baseball, or semi-pro, where you could get paid to play. In amateur baseball people weren't supposed to be paid. But some of us were. The sponsor provided the money. Why do you think we won two years in a row.

Q: Out of all your baseball playing, what was your greatest thrill?

A: It had to be the night when I pitched for Galveston for the first time. The White Caps were playing Lake Charles. This was the pros. And here I was, an electrician, facing them. I struck out 14 that night. Those guys on the other team were really on me from the dugout. They were calling me names you wouldn't believe. That just made me pitch hard.

experience. I remember it distinctly. The stands were packed. We were playing out there where the old airport was in Galveston.

Q: When did you retire from baseball?

A: That 1962 game was the last one I played. Another thing you might want to know of happened when I was pitching for Galveston in 1950. The Chicago White Sox called me at work and said they'd give me $3,000 to sign a contract. I would have gone to some farm team, I don't know where. That was after the season was over at Galveston and they'd given me my release. That was a lot of money in 1950.

Q: So why didn't you take the $3,000?

A: To be honest, I just didn't believe I was good enough. I'm being honest. I threw side-arm where the ball has a tendency to go down and away from right hand hitters. But left handers loved that. I had trouble with the left handers. I believed in the pros, they stack them against me. That's the reason I didn't sign. I could have gotten the $3,000, but I would have had to quit my job. If I had I wouldn't be in this house today, for I have gotten a good retirement.

Q: When did you return to Panola County?

A: We came back in 1985. We had lived in Deer Park and sold our home there. We had some renters in the house across the road. We told them we had to have the house, and moved in. We had carpenters come from Houston and lived there too while they were building this house in 1985. My wife and I are here. Our three children are living and working in the Houston area with their own families. They are all doing well there.

Q: Let us briefly go back to Carthage High team of 1941. Who pitched besides Jim Reeves?

A: June Graves was a good pitcher too. He threw harder than Reeves. He also played pro-ball later. I don't know who he played for. I think it was in the Big State League. Chester Studdard was an all-state ball player, but went on to school to

be a dentist. I played as a pro too, but played first base since we had Reeves and Graves as pitchers. There were a lot of good athletes on that team. And we played a lot together before we got to high school.

Ralph Allen also shared an article from 1957 with us on his pitching exploits in Houston.

Iron Man' Allen of Amateurs Has Gaudy 162-22 Mound Marks

By: John Hollis

Noticing the 1957 successes of "those old fellers" Stan Musial, Ted Williams, Murry Dickson, and Bobby Shantz, 34-year-old Ralph Allen breaks into a large East Texas grin and contemplates a comeback.

Houston amateur baseball's version of Iron Man McGinty, the tall, wiry Allen owns a fantastic non-professional pitching record, 162 wins against 22 losses in the eight years including three no-hit games.

Sandwiched between an outstanding amateur career are stints in the Evangeline and Gulf Coast pro leagues where Allen was a pitching "specialists."

"I pitched road games only on weekends and in home games," the Stuart's Drive-Inn bellwether grins. "I guess I did all right. Had a 15-9 record with Galveston in 1950. Maybe I ought to go back into pro ball. If Red Murff can do it, so can I. But I wouldn't want to leave my job at Champion Paper."

AUTHOR OF FOUR shut outs and a 21-1 record this season, Allen mixes homespun philosophy with his pitching.

"I'll try to get the batter to move around up there," he winks. "They don't like to dig in against a right hander with that cross fire delivery."

An important member of five past city amateur champions and two national titlists (Mechanics Uniform, 1954-55). Allen sticks to the stock pitches to get out a batter. "Fast ball, curve ball, and a little something off the fast ball for a change-up," he nods. "That's all you need. But I'll tell you; the amateurs hereabouts are a lot tougher to get out than they used to be."

"THERE ARE MORE good baseball players around town now than we've ever had," Allen intones. "We have fewer teams, but not because of lack of ball players.

"There just aren't enough sponsors to get 'round, that's all. Why there are a lot of ex-pros in this town who'd like to play amateur ball again if there were teams available. One of them left our team last week because he wasn't getting to play. Reason is you're allowed just so many ex-pros, classmen,' they're called, on an amateur team.

"You've got to pitch to these guys in the amateur now. You can't get by with just throwing something up there. Old pros like Jim Matthews, Bobby Ray Powledge, Sonny Bollman, Bob Graham, Johnny Taylor, Rip Van Winkle, and a lot of others are real good hitters."

ALLEN, NICKNAMED "The Hawk," has had some considerable success with his pitching formula against ever-stronger hitters. Last year he gave only three home runs all season and so far this season only the husky Matthews has tagged him for a homer.

Allen started his baseball in DeBerry, a tiny township just miles inside Texas border 30 miles from Shreveport. From there went to Carthage, played first base and helped his team to the state high school finals in Dallas in 1941. It was there Allen and Carthage opposed big Clint Hatung, the Hondo hurler later with the New York Giants, and knocked him out of the box. Allen and Stuarts face Hartung and Sinton next Saturday in an exhibition there.

"One of our guest pitchers, Jim Reeves, the singer, was on Steve Allen's TV show last week," Allen grinned. "He and June Graves were our two best pitchers."

ALLEN BEGAN HIS Houston amateur career in tremendous fashion in 1949, winning 18 games without loss for the old Heights Bulldogs. He pitched no-hitters against the Glenn McCarthy Shamrocks in 1949, Calico in 1954 and Galveston last year.

An electrician at Champion Paper where he's worked for 11 years now, Allen has a son, Robert, in Little League ball, a 10-year-old second baseman with a fine arm.

"He can throw hard," Ralph nods. "It's funny how some guys can throw hard and others can't. I believe the ones who can are the ones who've been throwing all their lives."

Scott Lee

Scott Lee grew up in Linden, Texas as an active student-athlete who then went off to Texas A&M University. After graduation he came to Carthage High School. He served two years as the assistant baseball coach, and then moved up to become head coach. His tour has been highly successful including making the playoffs nine years in a row. The highlight of his coaching at Carthage was leading the team to the state championship in 1990. More success is sure to follow.

Q: When and where were you born?

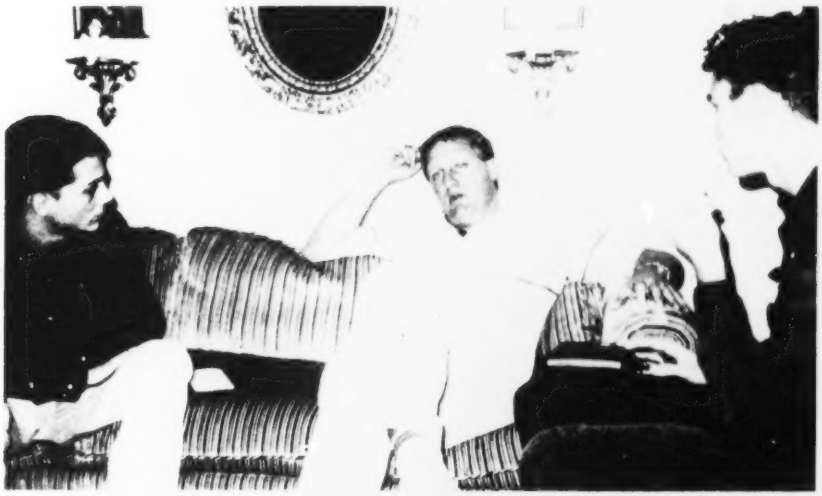
A: I was born September 14, 1958 in Linden, Texas.

Q: How was your family and school as you were growing up?

A: I have one younger sister. She is two years younger than me. We both grew up in Linden, Texas and graduated from Linden Kildaire High School. I later went on to Texas A&M and spent four years there. I graduated from there in 1981.

Q: How did you learn to play baseball?

A: My dad was very active in sports and he coached the league even before I was old enough to play. I played on his team all the way through junior high.



Scott Lee with staff members Brad Kennedy and Cody Pierce

Q: How was baseball in high school and through college?

A: When I was younger, I was a very good little league player and I had a very good high school career. I played as shortstop and pitcher. Our team won regional, which was as far as you could go back then. We would have gone to state if there would have been a state game. I also played football and basketball.

Our basketball team went to state when I was a senior. The high school that I attended was very athletic and that gave me a good background. I went to A&M thinking I was going to be on the team, but I hurt my arm the summer before we started and I had to walk on. I didn't have a very good chance because of my arm condition, so I just went there to get an education and I did not play any college baseball at all.

Q: Was Carthage your first coaching job?

A: Yes, I graduated from A&M on a Saturday, moved on Sunday, and started working on Monday. I started coaching in 1981 and this is my eleventh year as head coach. I was the assistant coach to Glen Alexander for two years.

Q: How has baseball in Carthage been since you have been coaching there?

A: I have been very fortunate because we have been very strong. We have made it to the playoffs for the last nine years in a row. The people are very serious about baseball around here. When I first got here, baseball was only played at certain times of the year and now kids just about play it all year long. It turned into an all year sport instead of just a springtime sport. I think this happened because after we won state in 1990, there were some kids on that team that worked all year long and I think that some people have copied what they did hoping to achieve the same success they did.

Q: How was the season leading up to then?

A: Well we had high expectations because we went 21 and 4 the year before. We had seven of the starters back so we knew that we would have a good team. All through regular season we had a pretty good team but it wasn't a real good team. All of a sudden in district we just kicked it in and we started beating everybody really bad, and we got all the way through the playoffs. We defeated Waxahachie who had been in the top ten forever, and we beat them up there 2 out of 3 games. Then Anthony Williams made a great catch against Mount Pleasant that really propelled us on to Austin. But once we got to Austin we really had a pretty easy time. We won 7 to 1 and 9 to 3.

I really feel like there were a couple of teams that we played in our region that could have won the state championship if they could have beaten us.

Q: What was your playoff record?

A: We were 9 and 1 during the playoffs.

Q: Who were the players that year?

A: Our pitchers were Robin Trimble and Daniel Hodges. Our catcher was Brandon Milam, the first baseman was Barry Alexander, second baseman was Terrence Gorree, third baseman was Jerome Jones, short stop was Tim Harkrider, right fielder was Krishna Wall, center fielder was Anthony Williams, and our left fielder was Cyrus Henderson or Robin Trimble when he was not pitching.

Q: How has the baseball team been since that year?

A: The year after we won state, everybody had expectations because we had six starters coming back. We were rolling along pretty good and Jerome Jones broke his ankle during the second district game, it seemed like everything went downhill from there. We won bi-district that year, but Waxahatchie beat us in the last inning to knock us out of the playoffs. The next year we were 27 and 2 and we lost our first round of the playoffs to Mt. Pleasant. Last year, we won bi-district and Mt. Pleasant beat us in the last inning and went on to win the state championship. We have been really competitive, but it has gotten to the point to where we have won so much that the people expect you to win now. If you did not go really far in the playoffs, they think that you did not have a really good year. Most people would be proud just to get there, but we expect to do a little better than that.

Q: How do you think the team is going to be this year?

A: We should have a good team because we got eight starters back from the last year. We have to stay away from the injuries because we had several in the last few years. We are expecting to have a good year, but anything can happen.

Q: Do you think that you will be here forever?

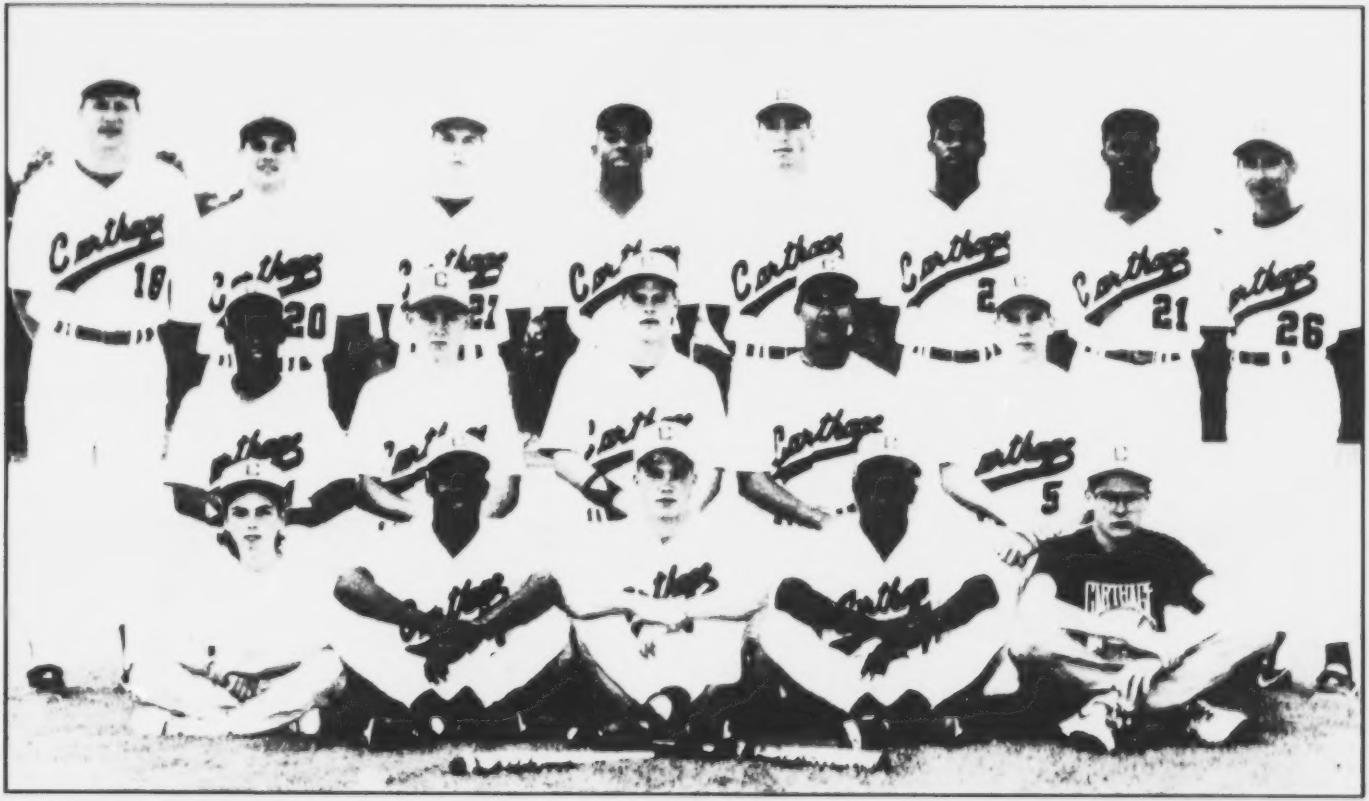
A: When I moved here, I never thought I would be here more than three or four years at the most. We have had good teams and good players and I have had a great boss. I have had opportunities to leave and I had no reason to. The year that we won state, I was selected All-Star Coach by the Texas High School Coach Association and I got to coach in the Astrodome. I have been offered a lot of opportunities that I would not have been offered if I would not have come to Carthage.

Carthage High School- 1990 Season
Season Record: 30-5
District Record: 12-0
District 16-4-A Champions
Region 2 Champions
State Champions

Bottom Row- Left to Right -
Shane Capps, Ballboy; Anthony Williams, Brandon Smith, Marius Allen, Andy Dawson, Manager.

Middle Row- Left to Right -
Krishna Wall, Corey Jordan, Brad Robinson, Daniel Hodges, Brandon Milam.

Back Row- Left to Right -
Scott Lee, Head Coach; Stephen Alexander, Timmy Harkrider, Terrence Goree, Robin Thimble, Syrus Henderson, Jerome Jones, Tim Harkrider, Asst. Coach.



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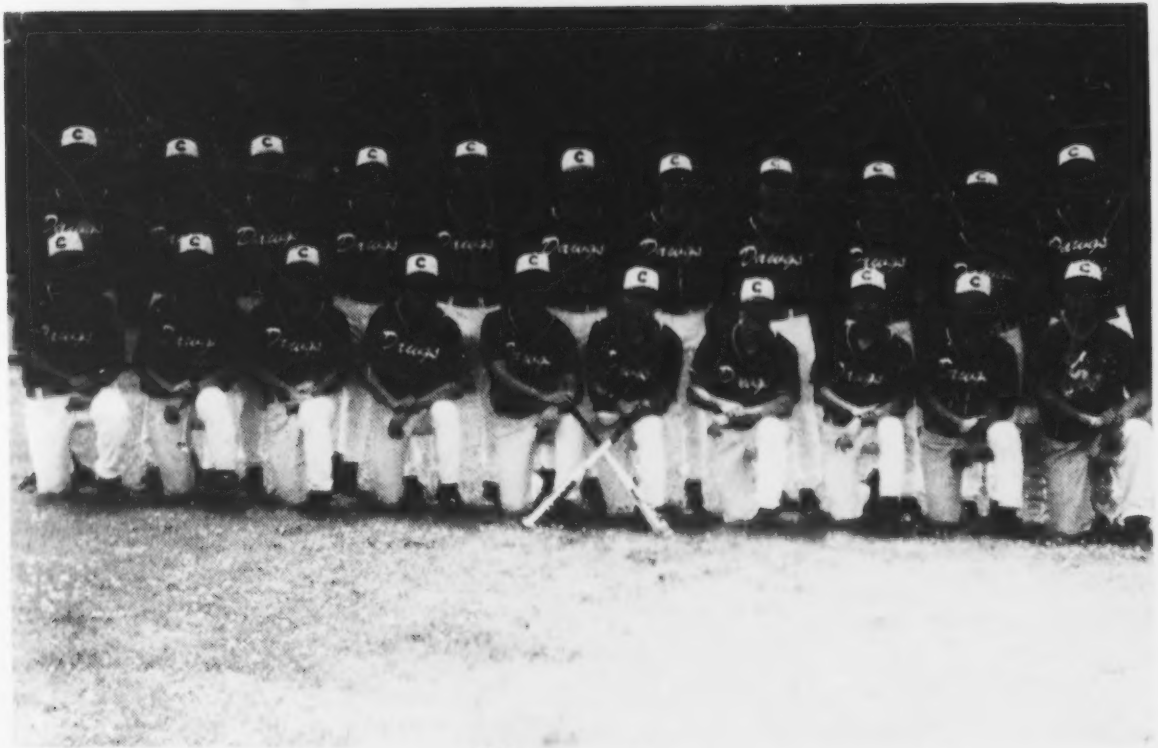
1994 Team- State Semi-Finalist

Back Row- Left to Right -
Coach Bryan Stacey, Lorenzo Williams, Shane Capps, Tommy Earle, Shawn Shuemaker, Brian Lawerance, Adam Leggett, Roy Evans, Tom Trimble, Edward Jones, Coach Scott Lee.

Front Row- Left to Right -
Scott James, Justin O'Neal, Charles Foshee, Trent Pride, Jonathan Simpson, Kip Harkrider, Jarrod Bagley, Adam Hoffpauir, J.W. Romero, Trainer Andrew Spray.



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Jeff Etheridge

Jeff Etheridge is a product of East Texas baseball who got his first game experience at age four. He went on to play at Carthage High School under Coach Scott Lee, and then to Panola College to play for Coach Jacke Davis. Jeff Etheridge was then drafted and signed for the Philadelphia Phillies. He played in their Minor League system for over two years, and retired from baseball after that. He is now in the Army serving with the Rangers. We caught up with him when he came home on leave.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born on June 26, 1967 in Jacksonville, Texas.

Q: How was your family and early schools?

A: I have two older brothers and an older sister. I moved to Carthage when I was five and then I graduated in 1985 from Carthage High School.

Q: How did you learn to play baseball?

A: My two older brothers were playing in Little Leagues in Jacksonville when I was four and I learned to play baseball by watching and playing ball with them. I played my first baseball game when I was only four because one of the teams that my brother played for was short of one man so I took his place. Then I went on to play Pee-Wee league the year after I moved here and I kept on moving up and eventually made it to the All-Stars.

Q:How was baseball in high school?

A: I started playing my freshman year in high school and I broke the toes on my right foot and I could not play. Then my sophomore year I got pneumonia and I could not play. My junior year I started playing and we were playing a scrimmage against San Augustine and I broke my hand, so there went 90% of that year. I finally got to play all through the season when I was a senior.

Q: What position did you play?

A: I mainly played in the outfield, but I did play short stop a few times.

Q: How did you do in high school?

A: I did pretty good I guess. I think I hit like .385.

Q: Who was your coach?

A: Scott Lee. He was my coach all four years. He came to Carthage when I was a freshman. He was a really good coach. Coach Lee was a coach that did not try to change your style of playing. He just worked with your natural ability.

Q: What led you to Panola?

A: Coach Davis was watching some guy from Henderson and I hit two home runs that game, and he said that he really liked my bat speed. But he really did not know that I could run or how good of an arm I had, so I never heard anything from him. Then I went to a Cincinnati Red camp up in Mineola and some colleges there saw me and asked why in the world Jackie had not picked me up yet. I finally went to Panola on a scholarship that the American Legion gave me.

Q: How was your first year?

A: It was kind of rough. In the spring he wanted me to catch a little bit and play third base some. They really needed a catcher and wanted me to catch. That didn't last long because I had a terrible time getting the ball back to the pitcher. I would hit him in the ankles or make him jump in the air. He got rid of that idea and I stayed out in the outfield. Hitting the ball was my big thing. It was hard adjusting from high school pitching to college pitching, but I did it. My very last time at bat in the Fall was when we were playing Centenary and I hit a home run. That just carried over into the spring. My very first at bat in the Spring was a home run against Angelina and it just took off from there. My sophomore year I got kicked off the team and missed out a year of baseball but I continued to go to school at Panola. Later, I went back and talked to Jacke and to the Dr. McDaniel, which was the president and they let me come back the next year and play. I really missed out not playing in my second year because there were some people looking at me and when they found out I was not playing, they kind of forgot about me. I did not continue to work out because I was bummed out about not playing, so I did other things. When my true sophomore year came around, we had a really good team and we went to the state tournament. We had David Lowery who later played for the University of Texas. He was #1 in the nation in hitting.

That was the best team I ever played on in my life. We were very solid. We were more solid than any team that I have been associated with in my life.

Q: What was your record?

A: We were 52 and 17 and that was in 1988.

Q: Was that the most games you ever won in a season?

A: Yes it was. That was the most games Panola ever won in one season.

Jeff Etheridge

Q: What happened in the state tournament?

A: Well, we went down there and really messed up a game that should have been won, and we got put in the losers bracket. Well, we made it through the losers bracket but the bad thing is we ran out of pitchers. So when we got to San Jacinto we were pulling people from shortstop, second base and wherever we could find them. What was so bad was that we had to beat them twice and we had lost one and they had

not lost any. Of course they were loaded and we got into a slugfest with them instead of a pitcher's duel. They beat us 15 to 13 and went on to win the National Championship. I feel like we were the second best team in the nation anyway.

Q: So how was your freshmen year?

A: I did not do bad. I struck out more than I should have so I wasn't a home run hitter and I only hit like three home runs. I was the type of person who got on base and could steal bases. But the curve ball gave me a terrible time. I could never hit a curve ball.

Q: How is college ball to high school ball?

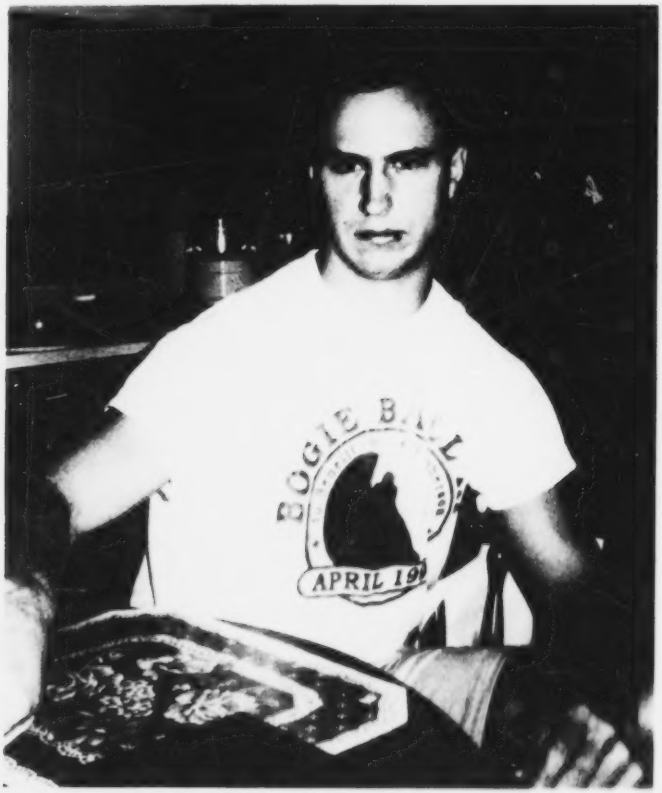
A: It's a lot faster. You have to be a lot more mentally prepared. Things just happened a lot quicker.

Q: What teams were looking at you and talking to you about playing for them?

A: I was talked to by several teams and I got letters from the Texas Rangers, Pittsburgh Pirates, and the Blue Jays. There were more National League people than there were American League for the simple fact that I could run better than I could hit. That did not bother me because I would rather play in the National League anyway. Then at the state tournament the Phillies gave me a couple of bats and balls and they told me me that they wanted me to get used to hitting with a wooden bat because they were going to draft me. They also told me that they were going to have a camp and that was very important that I come. So I went down there to the camp which was held at Angelina Junior College in Lufkin, Texas. When I got there, all of the scouts were there and they came up to me and introduced themselves. They talked to me and told me what they expected me to do while I was there. They also told me to relax and do what I was capable of doing. I went down there and did really well, so they drafted me in the ninth round out of Panola in 1988. When I was playing rookie ball in Martinsville, Virginia, I broke up a no-hitter in the top of the eighth inning against Steve Avery, who has now pitched in two World Series Games for the Atlanta Braves.

I imagine that I made him mad because that was the only hit that he gave up all night.

Q: How was life in professional baseball?



Jeff Etheridge

A: Life was good in professional ball. It was kind of difficult the first year because a guy hit a home run and I ran up against the fence and broke my arm and I went home for the rest of that season. I was leading the league in stolen bases when I left and I still ended up with second or third in that league. I also hit my first home run left handed that game. They just told me to come back the next year with the intent of playing some more. They kept me in extended spring training in Florida because I broke my arm the first year and they wanted to make sure that I did not get frustrated. They just wanted me to move gradually. I had been hitting left handed

and the first time that I got up to bat in a Phillies uniform, the pitcher was throwing about 94 or 95 miles per hour and I was batting right handed. My eyes had never seen anything from that the side of the plate moving so fast. That was an adjustment that I had to make. It was very hard to make that type of adjustment because they kept changing my stance. I went along with what they did, but it was frustrating to me because they were changing me every so often.

That last year still kills me today. I went back to spring training in 1990 on the Clearwater roster and I stayed there for about three days and they moved me down to the Spartinburg roster. I stayed there and played and they let me go and play with the AA teams a couple of times. The only difference between A and AA ball is the pitcher control and the mental part of the game. In fact, I thought it was easier to hit the higher you got because the pitches were going to be thrown around the plate. I also got to play against Jason Bridges from Henderson . He was with the Yankees and that was who they were playing. It kind of felt like old times because we got to play against each other again. But it came time for people to depart and they left me back in spring training and I just did not understand that. How you can go from high A to low A to AA and back down to extended spring training is beyond me. So my confidence was shot for a couple of days and then I finally said to heck with it , you're playing, so continue to play. We got a new coach and he was an older man. His name was Eli Grba, he had been a pitcher for the California Angels. He did not like me at all. I never did anything to him, but he griped me out on a regular basis. He told me he did not like me because I was a redneck, so I guess if you are from the South you are a redneck in his eyes. This went on and on, so I finally said I have had enough and I went back and I told him a few things. Everything was good for a couple of weeks because I had talked to management about him. I had other coaches asking me what in the world is wrong and why I wasn't playing as much and why he didn't like me. All I could tell them was that I didn't know. These were coaches that I haven't played for that came up and ask me. So I went and talked to the management and they agreed with me, but there wasn't a whole lot that they could do. They tried to side with me, but things just didn't work out. I finally decided it was time to come home and do other things with my life.

Rob Trimble

Rob Trimble has accomplished some great things in his young years. He was a leader in Carthage High School winning the state championship in baseball in 1990 with a 16-0 record as a pitcher. He was also chosen as the Most Valuable Player at the state tournament. At Texas A&M he became a catcher and played a big part in the Aggies reaching The College World Series in 1993. And now he is pursuing a dream to play in Yankee Stadium someday while participating in their minor league system.

66

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born June 2, 1972 in Dallas, Texas.

Q: Can you tell us about your family and schools while you were growing up?

A: After I was born we only lived in Dallas for three years and then we moved to Mount Pleasant. I went to grade school up to sixth grade, and then we moved to Carthage. And I've lived in Carthage ever since. So I went through junior high and high school in Carthage. Carthage is where most of my family is anyway.

Q: Where did you learn to play baseball?

A: I started playing with the youth leagues in Mount Pleasant. My dad kind of had a part in it. He was always my coach for all my teams when I was growing up. He had some friends and their kids played ball. And they got into the baseball thing.

Q: In high school tell us about your baseball team? Tell us something about that?

A: We were on good teams. In my freshman, sophomore, and junior years we thought we were good enough to go to state. And in my senior year we finally did it. We went to state and won it in 1990. That was a good experience because no team from Carthage had ever won a state title. The community really got behind us. It was pretty cool.

Q: How was your pitching during this time?

A: I enjoyed the pitching. I guess I wasn't the main pitcher until my senior year. In my sophomore and junior years, Timmy Harkrider and I switched out pitching a lot. Then in my senior year he had some arm trouble so I kind of picked up the slack for him a little bit. So I did most of the pitching that last year. But I enjoyed pitching. I don't think I could do it right now in the Big Leagues. It was fun in high school.

Q: What was your pitching record when you were a senior?

A: My pitching record as a senior was 16-0. I guess I got lucky.

Q: Why did you choose Texas A&M for a college?

A: Shoot, I've been an Aggie for a long time. My grand-dad and my dad both went to A&M. So I was already an A&M fan. In 1989 when I was a junior in high school I went up to A&M to watch a baseball game. They had the number one team in the nation. They had a great crowd and a super team. I had a great time, and wanted to be a part of that. So when I got a chance and they offered me a scholarship, I jumped at it.

Q: Why did you switch to catcher?

A: Well, I was a pitcher in high school, and I never caught. But everybody seemed to think I threw like a catcher, and I did, and I hit the ball pretty good. So they decided to try me back there as a catcher. And things have worked out.

Q: Tell us something about playing in Alaska?

A: Alaska was fun because it offered me the opportunity to go there which never would have happened if I hadn't played baseball. It's just one of the many places I've gotten to visit because of baseball. It was a good experience for me. It's different. It's daylight in the summer for almost 22 hours of the day. It doesn't really get dark. The people were good. I got to live with a very nice family.

Q: What about the College World Series of 1993?

A: The College World Series was another great experience. I've had a lot of them in baseball. I've been very fortunate. It was like the Texas state championship, but maybe a little bit bigger. It was good for A&M. It was like the first time that A&M had made it to the College World Series when they started Regional play. That was where we were invited to go to Regional play and had to win there. That's the first time A&M had done that. They had been to the College World Series before, but that was just an invite. So it was a big deal for A&M, and a big deal for me. It was a good experience.

Q: How did you do there?

A: We got a tie for fifth. We won our first game against Kansas, and then lost our next two. We should have won the whole thing. We were beating LSU 8-2 in the fifth inning. And we let them come back and beat us. LSU eventually won the whole thing. But the LSU pitcher we knocked out of the game in the fourth inning was the freshman who threw the final game and struck out all those guys. He threw like a one-hitter in the championship game. I think we had the best team there, but things just didn't work out.

Q: When and where did you decide to sign with the Yankees?

A: It was one of the toughest decisions that I ever had to make. That is, I had to decide whether to sign to play pro-ball or stay another year in college. There's a lot of things involved. I knew I'd get enough money to come back to school when I could and during the off season. I knew I'd get my schooling done. But I did want to stay in school and play for A&M because I had good times there. But the Yankees are a good organization and they treat their players right. And the money was right that they offered me.

Rob Trimble

But I guess the big thing was I decided it was best just to get into the race and get started before the next guy. I guess it was just getting in it and getting started, and not waiting another year which would put me another year back.

Q: Where did you sign?

A: I signed in Oneonta, New York on July 4, 1993. I was in Alaska and the Yankees kept calling me and asking me to sign. They asked, "When are you going to sign." I finally decided I would sign with them. They flew me from Alaska straight to New York. And I signed as soon as I got off the plane.

Q: What was your first pro season like?

A: The first year had its ups and downs. It was fun though. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed playing pro ball. It's different form playing college ball. You play every single day, Monday through Sunday. You only get two or three days off the whole season. And that's the big thing in playing eight solid months. You only get four or five days off. It kind of wears and tears on you. Also it was an adjustment getting used to a wooden bat after using an aluminum one all through school. That was kind of tough at first. But I got used to that. But overall, it was fun just getting in and playing pro ball.

Q: What position did you play?

A: I played catcher.

Q: Did you ever switch back to pitcher?

A: I asked before I signed if they were thinking of switching me back to pitching. And they said they had no intentions of that. That's another reason I felt good about signing with the Yankees. I think some other teams had it in mind to make me pitcher, and I didn't want to do that. I think I've thrown enough pitches already. In high school, I think my arm was worn out from pitching there.

Q: Do you prefer catching?

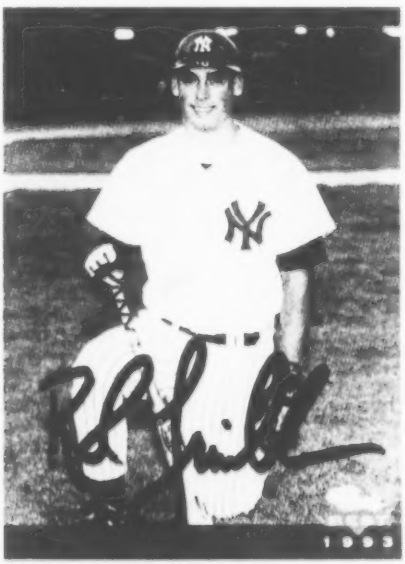
A: I prefer catching because I get to hit. And if I pitched, they'd DH for me and I wouldn't get to hit. My favorite part of the game is hitting.

Q: What do you see as your future in baseball?

A: Right now the future looks bright. Maybe if next season is not successful it won't look the same. I just got back from an Instructional League which is where they send their top projects in their minor leagues for some extra work, some one-on-one stuff. And I got good reviews from that. They feel like I'm headed in the right direction and that I have a bright future ahead of me with the Yankees. So I'm excited about that.

Q: Where did you go for the Instructional League?

A: It was Tampa, Florida. I spent seven weeks there this Fall after the regular season was over.



Rob Trimble

Q: So you didn't go to school this Fall?

A: No, since I went to Instructional League I didn't get to go this

Fall. But I was planning on going until the Yankees invited me to Tampa.

Q: So, how about life after baseball?

A: That's a good question because I've sat and thought about that a lot. Well, maybe not a lot, but I do wonder what I'll do after baseball. It's hard to believe me not playing baseball anymore, but it's going to happen. If things don't work out in baseball, and I don't get to play in the Big Leagues, then I'll know I'll have a good education.

I'm majoring in Sports Management because I like sports and want to stay around it. I don't know what job I'll get but I'll stay around it somewhere. Maybe I'll get a job in the Yankees organization in the Front Office if they like me enough.

Q: So where will you be going in March (of 1994)?

A: I'll be going back to Tampa for spring training. I don't know how long it lasts, but they'll let me know at the end of spring training where I'll be going. That is, to where my regular season team will be.

Q: Any ideas where yet?

A: Probably Greensboro, N.C. The Yankees minor league organization consists of: Rookie Ball, Short Season-A, two A Clubs, a Double A Club, and a Triple A Club. Greensboro is one of the A Clubs. I might be in Double A. Who knows? It will be either A or Double A, hopefully Double A.

Q: Are you a left handed hitter?

A: Yes, and I throw right handed. That's a little bit unusual because I do a bunch of stuff with each hand. I eat left handed and write left handed, but I play golf and tennis right handed. So I'm all mixed up. I play racquet ball with both hands.

It is an advantage being a left handed hitting catcher. That's especially true with the Yankees, because their Big League park (Yankee Stadium in the Bronx) is really short in right field. That means a left handed hitter can turn on the ball and hit more home runs.

Q: Do you have any final thoughts on baseball?

A: Growing up in a community like Carthage was fortunate. Kids who play baseball are lucky. Some places don't have the good programs as found here in this county. You have a chance to play on some good teams.

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Tim Harkrider

Tim Harkrider has experienced a lot of success in just a few years time. Tim graduated from Carthage High School in 1990, and in his senior year was the short-stop on the state championship team. He went three years at the University of Texas and again played short-stop. At the end of his junior year, he participated in the College World Series and hit a home run. Then he signed a pro contract with the California Angels and spent the summer of 1993 in their minor league system. In 1994, he again played for an Angels farm team, and continued his quest for a career in the Big Leagues.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born in Panola General Hospital on September 5, 1971.

Q: Tell us a little about your family and your school?

A: I have one brother, Kip, and my mom and my dad. We have lived in Carthage our whole lives. I went to C.I.S.D. school district and to the University of Texas for three years.

Q: Tell us a little about your baseball experience, and how you learned to play baseball, and your dad's role?

A: I started playing when I was three years old. My dad and I worked out in the front yard. I started playing baseball when I was five. Ever since then I've played competitively on through Panola County District League, and I went and played at Carthage High School. Then I went to Dallas and played in the Connie Mack League then for two years. Next I went to the University of Texas for three years. I played in Alaska for two summers. Now I'm playing for the California Angels. I give all my credits first and foremost to God for giving me the ability to play baseball and then turn to my dad for all the work he put into me. And if it weren't for him I wouldn't be where I am today.

Q: Your a switch hitter, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Why did you become a switch hitter?

A: When I was thirteen I was a natural right handed hitter, and my brother was a left handed hitter. My dad wanted me to learn how to hit left handed because you face so many right handed pitchers and to offset the breaking stuff. I started working on it when I was 13 and when I was 17 I was switch hitting full time during the games. That's been a big plus for me, and that's going to be a big key to how well I move up with the Angels organization.

Q: Tell me about baseball in high school, and about the championship year?

A: The championship year was the year we had talked about since we were 15. The guys that were on the team played together on the 15-16 year old stars in Dixie League the year we went to the Dixie League World Series. We said that our Senior year, which was 1990, that we would win the State Championship. The year started off kind of lucky. We lost a few, got it together, and ended up going 30-5 and it was pretty much a dream come true. That's especially after I signed with Texas, and then went down and played in Austin on the field I would be playing on the next three years. Winning the State Championship game was probably right now the highlight of my whole baseball career.

Tim Harkrider (middle), with staff members Nathan Downing (left), and Cody Pierce (right)

Q: Tell us about your baseball experiences?

A: Dallas was probably the big boost to my baseball career. That's because I got out and had a lot more scouts that saw me and the talent level that I was playing with, was a lot better than what I was used to.

It was a step up, and really improved my game. I think playing in Dallas was a big by because I had to use up my ability to step up to the talent level I was playing with. It kind of pushed me over the edge.

Q: Tell us a little about your college experiences and why you chose the University of Texas?

A: I chose the University of Texas mainly because of the prestige that went along with the name. And I wanted to get drafted out of my junior year. I had some other top colleges recruiting me around the county, but I wanted to stay close to home. I felt Texas was the best place to improve my ability and stay close to home where my family could see me play. I had watched Texas play there until they started recruiting me. It was kind of a dream come true. I hadn't always thought about playing there for Texas. It was really fun.

Playing at Rice University Tim Harkrider at Short Stop, Stephen Larkin in background.

Q: Could you tell me a little about the College World Series and some of the great players you played with like Brooks Kieshenicke?

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A: The World Series was incredible. Right now that was the most fun I ever had on a baseball field, playing in front of 20,000 people. It was unbelievable. Sometimes you couldn't hear your own self talk. It was weird. At first when you went out there you were nervous, but once you got out there it was like playing out here at the Dixie League game with about 100 people watching. It was nice. I played with Brooks Kieshenicke, he was a first round pick with the Cubs this year. He and I played three years together. We became pretty good friends. He's a pretty good guy, and a great ballplayer. He's one of the best pure hitters I've ever seen. I also played with Calvin Murray. I played with him for two years, and I played with him in Dallas and he's one of the top guys in the Giants organization. He and I were roommates at Texas, he's a good guy also. He's one of the toughest, and most intense players I've ever played with.

Q: When did you sign with the Angels?

A: I got drafted June 3 , and I went ahead and finished the World Series and I waited for two weeks. I had trouble getting the contract negotiated, and then once I did that I guess I signed the 21st of June. They sent me to Boise, Idaho to play in a short season A league. I was there for five days and I got moved up to A ball in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and I played the last two months of the season there.

Q: How did you do your first year of professional baseball?

A: I did well. Over all I hit .270. I think that was their main concern, how I would hit with a wooden bat. I played solid defense and they were really impressed.

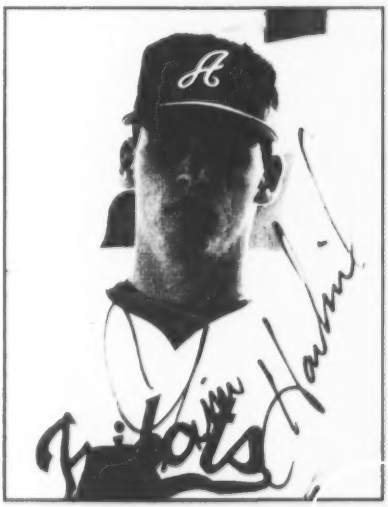
Q: Could you tell me a little about what you expect in the future?

A: Oh, I just got back from the Arizona Instructional League. I played six weeks out there. I was voted in " Baseball America," by the Angels, as the best defensive player they had in the draft this year. I did really well in the Instructional League. I only made one error the whole six weeks and hit .305. The two guys that were their shortstops with me are younger, and I feel

pretty comfortable in my ability that I can out play those guys. Right now the guys above me, I really don't know what they're going to do. From what they've told me, they have great plans for me, and plan on moving me up in the organization.

Q: Do you think you will play Double A or Triple A this year?

A: Next year I am not for sure. I feel I'll start out in high A and have a chance to play AA. It just depends how spring training goes. It depends on how I do and how other people do that decides whether or not I get moved up to double A. They do things in funny ways. You could be having a bad season (number wise) and you could be doing the little things right and they might move you up, or you could be having a great season and not get moved up.



Tim Harkrider

Q: Could you tell us a little about Kip (Tim's brother) signing with Texas?

A: He signed with Texas Friday. He was very happy. He was tired of all the recruiting calls. It came down to Texas or Tennessee, and he really liked Tennessee a lot.

I didn't push him anywhere, but I wanted him to stay in Texas because I wanted to see him play. He decided at the last moment to sign with Texas because Tennessee was too far and he wanted to come home when he wanted to. I was glad he went to Texas. There are some positives and negatives about Texas like there are about other places, but he's going to be in a good position to play next year. They know a little bit about him.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

A: I want to say a special thanks to my mom. Sometimes she doesn't get any credit for what I've done as to baseball because my dad and I work so hard together. I want to say that she was a big help all the way through from the top to the bottom, and she was always pushing me to get good grades. When Dad and I would be talking baseball, she would be talking and pushing my grades. I ended up at Texas with a 3.3 GPA. The most important thing to her besides baseball, was the grades.

Q: Are you planning on going back to get your degree?

A: Yes. It kind of depends. This fall I couldn't because I got back September first. I could have gone back then but I went to Instructional League for those six weeks. The first chance I get I'm going to go back and get it. It just kind of depends on the time limit, and if I play winter ball or not. If I don't then I'm going to go back and get my degree.